# SUICIDE in ADULTHOOD: Prevention & Intervention

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## Workshop Overview

- Suicide "101"
- Overview of Risk Factors
- Prominent Risk Factors for the Middle Aged & Elderly
- Warning Signs
- Prevention
- M Implications for Prevention Programs



### Suicide 101

- 11<sup>th</sup> Leading Cause of Death
- 30-31,000 / year in U.S.
- 600 700,000 attempts/ year in U.S.
- Rates Rise with Age
- Males Complete about 4 Times as Often as Females
- 90% Have Diagnosable Psychiatric Disorder
  - Co-morbidity
- Elderly Caucasian Males Generally have the Highest Rates



### Suicide as the "Perfect Storm"

- Genetic Factors
- Biological Factors
- Personality
- Past Experience
- Life Stressors
- Lack of Interpersonal Connectedness
- Social Issues
- Opportunity/ Access to Means



### Overview of General Risk Factors

- Previous Attempts
  - Especially multiple attempts
- Presence of Psychiatric Disorder
  - Esp. mood disorders and substance abuse
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal Ideation and Intent
- Exposure to Suicide
  - Esp. family hx.
- Isolation



### Overview of General Risk Factors

- Trauma History
- Resolved Plans And Preparations
- Perceived Burdensomeness
- Perceived Lack Of Belonging
- M Access to Means



# Risk Assessment: Additional Risk Markers

- Psychotic processes (thought disorder)
- Significant physiological dysregulation
- Magitation/ anxiety/ panic
- Recent discharge from psychiatric facility
- Distress at failure to complete after a suicide attempt



## Warning Signs of Imminent Risk: A Mnemonic

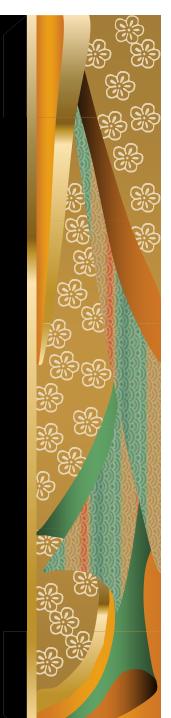
#### **IS PATH WARM**

- **I**deation
- **S**ubstance Abuse
- Purposelessness
- <u>A</u>nxiety
- **T**rapped
- <u>H</u>opelessness
- **M**ithdrawing
- Anger
- **R**ecklessness
- Mood Changes



## Warning Signs

- Dysregulation
  - Sleep, eating, weight-loss, lack of self-care
- Suicidal Ideation
  - Plan lethality, specificity, practicality
  - Frequency, intensity, duration
- Preparation & Rehearsal (Taking Action)
  - Seeking access to means
  - Rehearsing
  - Recklessness



# Warning Signs

- Leave-taking
- Communication of Suicidal Wish/ Intent
  - Wish to die
  - Fore-shortened future
  - Overt suicide threat



# Risk Factors for Middle Aged Adults & the Elderly

#### Depression

- Sadness, guilt, pessimism, anhedonia, sleep problems, loss of appetite, hopelessness, irritability, poor concentration
- Substance abuse with depression greatly increases risk
- Association of depression & suicide increases with age
- Life transitions
  - Loss of role status & functioning
  - Retirement
  - Financial / legal difficulties
- Recent interpersonal loss or separation



## Risk Factors for the Elderly

- Illness
  - Pain
  - Neurological, cancer, seizures, loss of vision, dyspnea
  - Also, recent Dx. & perception of illness
    - Threatened loss of function/control and heightened dependency
  - Functional impairment, eg. loss of vision
- Personality Traits/ Coping Style
  - Rigidity of coping style, lack of openness to new experience, and reluctance to seek help
- Access to Means
  - Especially firearms & medications
- Perceived Burdensomeness
- Isolation
  - Lack of a confident
  - Lack on membership in social organizations (e.g., church, Elks, etc.)
- Recent spousal loss



### Prevention

- Cultural Barriers to Prevention
  - Ageism
  - Normality of depression, even suicidality, in the elderly
  - Taboo about asking about suicide
  - Non-acceptability of help-seeking
- Raising General Community Awareness
- Education of Gate Keepers
  - Clergy
  - Funeral professionals
  - VNA
  - Medical Personnel
- Increasing Accessibility of Services
  - E.g., including behavioral health services in primary care



## Prevention Strategies

- Mental Health Collaboration with Primary Care Physician
  - PROSPECT Program
- Outreach Programs
  - Telephone based social support/ contact
  - Bereavement support programs



## SUMMARY - General Principles of Prevention Programs

- Buy-in Of Key Leadership in the Community
- Destigmatization Of Psychiatric Disorder & Suicide
- Raising Awareness Of Risk And Warning Signs
- Prescribing Appropriate Response to Risk
- Screening, Detection, and Outreach to At-risk Individuals
- Facilitating Help-seeking & Access to Services
- M Appropriate Follow-through With Services
- Lowering General Risk Factors And Increasing Protective Factors (e.g. - Social Connection)



# Suggestions About Prevention for Adults and the Elderly

- Anything That Reduces Isolation
- Aggressive Identification & Rx. Of Depression
- Screening Through Medical Delivery System



# Suggestions About Prevention for Adults and the Elderly

- Workplace Awareness
  - Esp. of impact of job loss
- Bereavement Care
  - Education of bereavement caregivers
    - Funeral Directors
    - Clergy
    - Medical providers
  - Increase availability of bereavement support services
    - Support groups
    - Internet
    - One to one outreach/ contact
    - Identification of complicated/ prolonged grief reactions



# Wrap-Up

- **Questions?**
- Comments?
- Discussion?

